**Admit slip directions**: Read the excerpt below and answer the questions on the back.

Excerpt from *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Background: Shuhkov is a prisoner in a labor camp in the Soviet Union during the 1950s.

Note: There is a definition bank at the bottom to help you with unknown (bolded) words.

“They sat in the cold **mess-hall**, most of them with their hats on, eating slowly, picking out **putrid** little fish from under the leaves of boiled black cabbage and spitting the bones out on the table… The only good thing about “skilly” was that it was hot, but Shuhkov’s portion had grown quite cold. However, he ate it with his usual slow concentration… Sleep aside, the only time a prisoner lives from himself is ten minutes in the morning at breakfast, five minutes over dinner and five at supper.

The skilly was the same every day. Its composition depended on the kind of vegetable provided that winter. Nothing but salted carrots last year, which meant that from September to June the skilly was plain carrot. This year it was black cabbage. The most nourishing time of the year was June: then all vegetables came on an end and were replaced by **groats**. The worst time was July: when they shredded **nettles** into the pot.

The little fish were more bone than flesh; the flesh had been boiled off the bone and had disintegrated, leaving a few remnants on head and tail. Without neglecting a single fish-scale or particle of flesh on the **brittle** skeleton, Shuhkov went on chomping his teeth and sucking the bones. He ate everything- the gills, the tail, the eyes when they were still in their sockets…

A spoonful of granulated sugar lay in a small mound on top of his bread **ration**… he sucked the sugar from the bread with his lips… and took a look at this ration, weighing it in his hand and hastily calculating whether it reached the regulation weight of 55 grams. He had **drawn** many a thousand of these rations in prisons and camps, and though he never had an opportunity to them on scales… he, like every other prisoner, had discovered long ago that honest weight was never to be found in the breadcutting. There was short weight in every ration. The only point was how short. So every day you took a look to soothe your soul- today, maybe, they won’t have snitched any. “

Definition Bank:

-mess-hall = A building where groups of people, such as soldiers or prisoners, eat together

-putrid = very unpleasant

-groats = hulled or crushed oats or wheat

-nettles = a course herb with stinging hairs

-brittle = hard but likely to break or shatter easily

-ration = a fixed amount of food allowed for each person during a time of shortage

-hastily = with excessive speed or urgency; hurriedly

-drawn = obtained (in this case- eaten)

**Analysis Questions:** Please answer in complete sentences.

1. What is “skilly” and what is it made of?

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2. Shuhkov notes that skilly was eaten every day. If this is one of only a few meals that prisoners eat each day, what might this say about the nutrient content of skilly? Why?

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3. If there are several fish in each serving of skilly, why did Shuhkov eat every part of the fish, including the gills, tail and eyes?

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4. What did Shuhkov mean when he said, in reference to his bread ration, “honest weight was never to be found in the breadcutting?” Why was that?

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5. Contrast the role food plays in your daily life with the role food plays in Shuhkov’s life.

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